

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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AMEMBASSY PAIRS
AMEMBASSY ROME
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AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USMISSION USUN

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 4149

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SY, LE, IS, MILI
SUBJ: LEBANON: SYRIAN INTENTIONS

REF: STATE 182460

1. IT IS PREMATURE TO CONCLUDE THAT INTERNATIONAL OPINION
HAS HAD A SUFFICIENT IMPACT ON SARG TO ASSURE THAT THE
SYRIANS WILL NOT GO ALL OUT AT SOME POINT TO DEAL WITH THE
CHRISTIAN MILITIAS MILITARILY. IN DISCUSSION JULY 20 WITH
LEONARD, HOWELL AND CHARGE, DEPFONMIN KADDUR MADE SOME
POINTS AS ARKIS THAT THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS WERE THE
CENTRAL OBSTACLE TO RESTORATION OF SECURITY UNDER UNITED

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LEBANESE GOVERNMENT. HE ALSO ACKNOWLEDGED, HOWEVER,
THAT EFFORTS WERE CURRENTLY UNDERWAY TO ISOLATE CHAMOUN
AND PHALANGE THROUGH A MUSLIM/DRUZE/CHRISTIAN CONSENSUS
AND WE GAINED THE IMPRESSION THAT SYRIA IS WILLING TO
GIVE THIS PROCESS SOME ADDITIONAL TIME TO ACHIEVE AN
EFFECT.

2. ON THE OTHER HAND, KADDUR CLEARLY LINKED PROGRESS BOTH IN BEIRUT AND IN THE SOUTH TO CONTROLLING THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS. NEITHER HE NOR ANY OTHER SYRIAN WE HAVE TALKED TO IN PAST FEW DAYS BELIEVES THAT THE CURRENT POLITICAL EFFORTS ARE GOING TO PRODUCE A PEACEFUL REINTERGRATION OF THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS AND THEIR POLITICAL LEADERS INTO THE ORGANS OF THE STATE. AT SOME POINT FORCE WILL HAVE TO BE USED. PRES. ASSAD'S PRESS DIRECTOR ASSAD ELIAS WAS VERY SPECIFIC ON THIS POINT EARLIER THIS WEEK IN TALKING TO A US JOURNALIST. HE SAID THAT ALTHOUGH ONE POUNDING HAD NOT HAD THE DESIRED EFFECT ON CHAMOUN AND THE PHALANGE, THREE OR FOUR POUNDINGS PROBABLY WOULD. WE ALSO NOTE THAT ALTHOUGH LEBANESE POLICE HAVE MOVED INTO SOME AREAS OF EAST BEIRUT THERE HAS BEEN NO WORD OF A REDUCTION IN ADF FORCES IN THE AREA. THEY REMAIN BASICALLY AS THEY WERE WHEN THE CEASEFIRE WENT INTO EFFECT, IN A REINFORCED POSITION.

3. THE MOST WE CAN SAY AT THIS POINT IS THAT UNLESS THEY ARE PROVOKED IN A SERIOUS, ORGANIZED ASSAULT, THE SYRIANS WILL MAINTAIN THE CEASEFIRE FOR ANOTHER FEW WEEKS WHILE THEY TRY TO FURTHER ISOLATE THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS POLITICALLY. THEY ARE PREPARED, HOWEVER, EVENTUALLY TO USE FORCE IF THE DESIRED RESULTS ARE NOT OBTAINED, AND THIS COULD BE SOONER RATHER THAN LATER IF THEY CONTINUE TO TAKE CASUALTIES FROM CHRISTIAN

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SNIPER FIRE AT THE RATE OF ABOUT 200 SOLDIERS PER MONTH AS GENERAL KHOURI CLAIMS IN CURRENTLY THE CASE. WE BELIEVE THAT THE IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL OPINION MAY HAVE PURSUADED THE SYRIANS AGAINST FURTHER BLIND ARTILLERY BARRAGES, BUT SYRIANS STRONGLY SUSPECT THAT IN THE END THE SOLUTION TO THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS PROBLEM IN EAST BEIRUT MAY HAVE TO BE A MILITARY ONE.

PELLETREAU

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